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ABSTRACT

Teachers, principals, and supervisors must become thoroughly familiar with innovations in the teaching of reading, and these new approaches should be evaluated thoroughly before being introduced in an elementary school. A quality reading readiness program might include the use of experience charts in which students propose experiences from a variety of sources to be transcribed in easy-to-read letters onto a chart to be used in discussion. Learning centers and individualized instruction should also be considered. Basal readers are widely used, but care must be taken to use basals creatively and on an individual level. Linguistic approaches and the use of specific objectives are advocated by some teachers and administrators as well. It is important to determine carefully students' reading level and to evaluate their reading progress so that individual differences among learners can be accommodated. (RS)

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READING IN THE LANGUAGE ARTS

Marlow Ediger

Each pupil should develop optimum proficiency in reading. Reading can be a very enjoyable leisure activity. Individuals enrich themselves by engaging in reading activities. In society, it is important for individuals to do much reading and thus remain informed about problems and issues on the local, state, national, and international levels. Each person may then have additional alternatives from which decisions can be made. A broad base of background knowledge may assist learners to increase their proficiency to make decisions.

Each pupil differs from other children in the class setting in achievement, capacity, interests, and motivation for reading. Thus, the teacher must make provision for individual differences among learners in the reading curriculum.

Experience Charts and Reading

In a reading readiness program for early primary grade children, experience charts may be developed cooperatively by pupils with teacher guidance. The experience chart approach is sound since it is based upon personal experiences of involved pupils. Thus, pupils experience ideas from excursions, filmstrips, films, pictures, slides, or discussions. Following the experience, pupils present content for an experience chart. The teacher in this situation prints the content using neat manuscript letters. Most pupils generally have not developed a writing vocabulary to do the actual writing. After the content has been written in large, highly legible manuscript letters, pupils read what has been written with teacher guidance. The teacher points to words and phrases as they are being read by pupils. Learners

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then are reading what they have experienced.

The following assumptions support utilizing experience charts:

1. Pupils are actively involved in experiences which provide content for an experience chart.
2. Learners present ideas for the experience chart.
3. Pupils with teacher help read content pertaining to their very own experiences.
4. Learners may notice how ideas are written down utilizing abstract letters in words.
5. The content in the experience chart is familiar to learners since it relates to their own personal lives.
6. The experience chart method may assist pupils to develop interest in reading.
7. Individualization is inherent in using experience charts since each child has unique experiences. Each child may then present content for a group or individual experience chart.

Learning Centers and Reading

A different approach to individualize instruction in reading pertains to the use of learning canters. One of these centers might well be a reading center. Library books should be on diverse reading levels and on various stimulating topics. Ideally each pupil selects an interesting library book to read on the appropriate reading level. Following the reading of a library book, pupil achievement may be evaluated in several ways.

1. Task cards at the learning center could be written with open-ended questions for pupils to respond to.
2. The teacher and pupil might discuss contents of a library book

which the latter has completed reading.

3. The child may choose his/her own approach in revealing comprehension pertaining to content in a library book such as in completing a diorama, a dramatization, a frieze, or a picture.
4. The pupil might share ideas gained from reading a library book within a small group or committee.

Any approach that is used to assess pupil achievement should stimulate learners to do additional reading.

Reading Readiness and Individualized Instruction

There are numerous learning activities which assist pupils in learning to read through a quality reading readiness program. Providing for individual differences is an important concept for teachers to follow when selecting learning activities in a reading readiness program.

Background information must be developed within pupils in a quality reading readiness program. Later, pupils will read much content where familiarity with ideas is important. To aid in developing background information, the following learning activities, among others, may be utilized:

1. Discuss pictures with pupils pertaining to ongoing units of study.
2. Show and discuss films, filmstrips, and slides.
3. Have pupils take an excursion and discuss observations made.
4. View and have follow-up activities pertaining to a telecast on educational television.
5. Develop learning centers with appropriate activities to help pupils achieve relevant background information.

For each of the above learning activities, purpose must be developed within pupils prior to participation. The learning activities can provide

for individual differences even though learners at selected intervals may be taught in large group instruction. Pupils may then interpret content from audio-visual materials on their own individual present achievement levels. It is best if most of these activities can be used in small group or committee work. Pupils may then have increased opportunities to interact with other learners in discussing acquired facts, concepts, and generalizations. The frequency of interaction in a discussion per pupil in small group work is greater than would be true of larger groups or the class as a whole.

In a quality reading readiness program, it is important for learners to experience hearing likenesses and differences in sounds. Thus, for example, a teacher may ask pupils to present words which have the same beginning sound as does the word "bat". Pupils may also be asked to give words which rhyme with "bat". These activities should aid learners to become increasingly proficient in phonetic analysis. Later, in more formalized programs of reading instruction, the use of phonetic analysis will aid in unlocking new words.

In a reading readiness program pupils begin to make associations between symbol and sound. When pupils are reading from an experience chart with teacher guidance, they may well notice specific letters in words and make the proper associations with sounds.

When selected objects are labeled in a class, pupils ultimately will also make associations between symbols and sounds. If they cannot identify the abstract word, the real object will tell its meaning, such as the labeled abstract word "chair" on a real chair. Pupils learn to identify individual words at different rates of speed. Provision may then be made for individual differences.

Pupils should have ample opportunities to browse through interesting

and appealing library books containing quality pictures. Illustrated books have a tendency to provide for individual differences when chosen by pupils. Learners may then interpret illustrations on their own individual achievement level. The teacher also needs to read library books to pupils in a reading readiness program. Thus, pupils may become motivated in wanting to learn to read.

Further learning activities in a reading readiness program might consist of pupils advancing at individual levels of achievement in noticing configuration clues. Experiences in noticing configuration clues must be provided in proper sequence for each learner. Among others, these learning activities may include the following:

1. Pupils make a cross on which word looks different from two other words (man lonely man).
2. Learners place an "X" on which letter appears different from two other letters (h h a).

Gross discriminations need to be made by pupils followed in sequence by those involving finer discriminations. Fine discriminations are involved in which a word or letter looks different in appearance from the remaining words/letters in each of the following sets:

1. house hen house
2. b b l
3. horse hill hill
4. a a b

Basal Readers and The Pupil

Basal readers are used quite frequently in elementary school classrooms. Teachers need to utilize the manual directly related to the basal reader in a creative manner. Too frequently, the manual is utilized rigidly. Suggestions pertaining to objectives, learning activities, and assessment procedures found in manuals of basal readers should be adapted to individual

differences in the class setting. The manual can give teachers many excellent suggestions to use in teaching-learning situations. The following criteria are recommended in helping pupils achieve to their optimum when basal readers are utilized:

1. Basal readers should be on the present achievement level of pupils when learning activities are provided.
2. Prior to reading a given selection, pupils should have adequate readiness activities such as:
   (a) gaining adequate background information.
   (b) seeing new words in manuscript print and attaching meaning to these words.
   (c) establishing purposes for reading. The purposes may pertain to questions which require answers from reading a given selection.
3. Following the reading activity, pupils should have appropriate followup activities, such as:
   (a) discussing purposes or answers to questions after reading a given selection.
   (b) writing a summary of main ideas read.
   (c) developing an illustration, frieze, mural, or diorama.
   (d) reading additional literature related to the content read.
   (e) selecting stories and books written by the same author.
   (f) reading selected portions orally.
   (g) writing diverse forms of poetry.
   (h) dramatizing selected sections of the content.
   (i) developing a related bulletin board display.

Basal readers have been misused by classroom teachers. Certainly,

teachers must apply relevant principles of learning in teaching-learning situations involving the use of basal readers. These principles would include:

(a) providing for individual differences.

(b) attaching meaning to what has been learned.

(c) stimulating learners in desiring to learn.

(d) praising pupils for improved performance regardless of past achievement.

(e) diagnosing pupil difficulties and working toward remediation.

(f) having learners achieve at their own optimum unique rates of achievement.

(g) selecting interesting learning activities.

(h) having pupils sense reasons for participating in ongoing learning activities.

(i) providing sequential learnings for learners.

(j) having pupils voice their concerns and interests in selecting reading materials.

(k) maintaing balance among objectives pertaining to learning word recognition techniques, reading for a variety of purposes, and reading for enjoyment.

There are selected procedures which have been used in situations involving the use of basal readers which definitely cannot be recommended. Among others, these include the following:

1. All pupils in a class being on the same page at the same time in a basal reader.
2. Every learning activity in the manual being utilized in teaching-learning situations for all pupils in the class setting.

3. Pupils rigidly developing learnings pertaining to phonetic analysis and other word recognition techniques when they already are reading proficiently.
4. Teachers emphasizing recall of information largely, when purposes for reading are being pursued on the part of pupils. Higher levels of thinking also need adequate emphasis, e.g. critical thinking, creative thinking, and problem solving.
5. Little emphasis being placed on pupils reading for enjoyment.
6. The same or similar methodology being used rather continuously in teaching reading.
7. Content in basal readers not being correleted or integrated with other curriculum areas in the elementary school.
8. Teachers not diagnosing pupil difficulties in reading adequately and not working toward remediation of problems.
9. Pupils not being taught in terms of using child growth and development characteristics.
10. Recommended principles of learning not being utilized in teaching-learning situations.
11. A lack of teacher knowledge or enthusiasm in teaching reading.

The teacher of reading needs to engage in self-evaluation to determine which trends in a modern reading curriculum should be emphasized in teaching-learning situations in the class setting.

Linguistics and Reading

Selected specialists have emphasized the importance of linguistic approaches in guiding learners to achieve in reading. According to one linguistic school of thought in beginning reading instruction, pupils should learn to read words which have rather through consistency between symbol

and sound. Pupils may then learn to read sentences in which words follow a specific pattern in pronounciation and spelling. Thus, the teacher might guide pupils in learning to read sentences containing the following words:

man fan Dan pan tan

ban can Nan ran van

Or, pupils in beginning reading could learn to read words such as the following in sentences:

bet net pet vet

met let set wet

It is difficult, of course, to write sentences with involved words following a pattern such as in the above named "man" family or "bet" family of words. This approach in the teaching of reading has been acceptable by some teachers. However, in the curriculum area of spelling, pupils in many units of study, learn to spell words where patterns are important. Thus, pupils are learning the structure of words such as in the following set where the initial consonant can be changed and a new word results: pat, rat, fat, cat, bat, hat, Nat, and sat.

There are advantages that linguistic approaches in the teaching of reading emphasize. These implications may also hold true for spelling. Among others, the advantages include the following:

1. Pupils can be aided in reading instruction by noticing how selected words pattern rather consistently between symbol and sound.
2. Learners develop understandings pertaining to structure of related words following a general or specific pattern.
3. Pupils may learn to identify new words when thinking of related patterns.
4. Learners develop a positive approach in identifying new words when

viewing structure or pattern of words.

Disadvantages in using linguistic approaches in the teaching of reading might be the following:

1. Monotonous reading activities may be experienced by pupils, especially in beginning teaching-learning situations.
2. There might be a lack of relationship in terms of how pupils speak using functional sentences as compared to reading content in begining reading using selected linguistic approaches.
3. Many words are spelled in an irregular manner in the English language and do not pattern well, such as "my", "sigh", "I", and "lye". These words contain the long "i" sound.

In using linguistic approaches in the teaching of reading, pupils encounter more of irregularly spelled words as they progress through the elementary school years. There also are irregularly spelled words which follow a pattern, such as "blight", "flight", "might", "plight", "sight", and "night".

Specific Objectives and Reading

Selected teachers, supervisors, and administrators advocate the use of specific objectives in the teaching of reading. These objectives are written in a precise manner. It is possible to measure if pupils have achieved specific objectives after instruction. Through observation, as one method of appraisal, the teacher can evaluate if pupils have or have not achieved the desired ends. Specific objectives must be selected carefully, prior to instruction, by those involved in teaching pupils. Thus, relevancy is an important concept to emphasize in selecting specific objectives for pupils to achieve.

The following are examples of specific objectives which pupils may achieve on their own unique achievement level:

1. The pupil will voluntarily read a library book and be able to answer three out of four questions correctly in evaluating comprehension.
2. The learner will pronounce correctly 95% of words encountered in reading a selection from the basal reader.
3. Reading a story of his/her own choosing, the pupil will state the main idea in the selection.
4. Having identified a problem in any curriculum area, the pupil will select five reference sources to gain a relevant solution.
5. The pupil will present at least three generalizations related to content read from a self-selected library book.
6. The learner will analyze a selection in reading by identifying three opinions given by the writer.
7. After completing the reading assignment, pupils will assess content in terms of presenting two accurate statements and two inaccurate statements.
8. The learner will tell a story pertaining to content read using appropriate sequence of sentences.
9. Following the reading of content in social studies, the pupil will give five facts contained in the selection.
10. Having read content pertaining to five story problems in mathematics, the pupil will tell in his/her own words information needed to provide viable solutions.

It is important for teachers to write significant objectives when specificity is important. Too frequently, specific objectives are written

which can be stated quickly and may then represent irrelevant learnings. Each objective in reading must be evaluated thoroughly in terms of acceptable standards.

Determining Reading Levels

One of the most important problems facing teachers of reading is to determine reading levels of individual pupils. Once this has been accomplished, the teacher has a further responsibility in finding materials which are beneficial to each individual. How can the teacher determine present reading levels of each pupil in the class setting?

1. The school may use standardized achievement tests to determine reading levels of pupils. These tests need to be assessed in terms of being valid and reliable. Grade equivalent test results from standardized tests may provide guidance to teachers in determining reading levels of learners on an individual basis.
2. The teacher may mark off approximately 100 running words in a basal textbook. The content has not been read previously by the pupil. The learner orally reads the selection to the teacher. Generally, pupils should pronounce 95 to 98 percent of the words correctly, if the involved book has content on the instructional level of the learner. The teacher also must select, with great care, four questions covering the selection to be read by pupils. Each pupil basically should be able to answer correctly three out of the four questions to assess comprehension in reading.

The figures given pertaining to correct word prounnciation as well as reading comprehension are approximate. If pupils, for example, pronounce 75% of the words correctly in a selection, comprehension will suffer.

Thus, the book being considered is not on the instructional level of individual pupils. Or, if a pupil continually pronounces all words correctly without previous practice and can continually respond correctly to all relevant questions asked to assess comprehension, the book being considered will generally be too easy for the learner. The textbook might then be considered to be on the recreational level of reading. There is no room for growth in recognizing new words in reading on the part of individual pupils if, without previous practice, the child can pronounce 100 percent of the words correctly. Thus, in a quality reading program, there is room in each lesson for pupils to learn to identify a few new words as well as be challenged in the area of comprehension.

The teacher then has an important responsibility in determining reading levels of individual pupils. Appropriate materials must be obtained to assist each pupil in achieving optimally in reading.

Evaluating Reading Achievement

In assessing pupil achievement in reading, teachers need to ask themselves, among others, the following questions:

1. Did I guide each child in learning to read to his or her highest potential?
2. Were reading materials provided for each child's own unique level of achievement?
3. Did pupils engage in more independent reading than formerly?
4. Were pupils guided in developing proficiency in word attack skills so that comprehension of content was at an optimal level?
5. Did it appear that pupils enjoyed learning activities involving reading?

6. Were pupils developing optimal skills in reading for a variety of purposes?
7. Did learners have ample opportunities to assess their own achievement in reading?
8. Were pupils permitted to make an adequate number of choices in terms of selections to be read?
9. Did each child achieve stated objectives in reading instruction?
10. Were attitudinal objectives emphasized adequately as well as skills and understandings objectives in teaching-learning situations?
11. Did pupils develop appropriate appreciations toward quality literature in the reading curriculum?
12. Were pupil difficulties in reading diagnosed adequately?
13. Was remedial reading instruction emphasized adequately for needy learners?
14. Did I attempt to determine reading levels of each pupil?
15. Were appropriate learning activities selected to provide for individual differences?
16. Did I use valid eveluation techniques in assessing learner achievement?
17. If pupils did not achieve desired objectives, did I attempt to determine causes for this happening to remedy identified deficiencies?

In Summary

There are many innovations in the teaching of reading. Teachers, principals, and supervisors must become thoroughly familiar with new methods of teaching. New approaches in teaching reading should be evaluated thoroughly before being introduced in an elementary school. Objectives in reading must be carefully selected for pupils to achieve. Learning activities to achieve

desired ends, as well as appraisal procedures to evaluate achievement, need to provide for individual differences among learners.

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